



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



DEPUTY SECRETARY POLLARD UPDATES SIOUX FALLS MAYOR ON STATE CEMETERY

SDDVA Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard met with Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken last week. Pollard provided TenHaken, and his new staff, an update on the proposed State East River Cemetery.

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NEW VA POLICY TO PROTECT VETERAN HOMEOWNERS

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has issued a new policy implementing the May 2018 Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act, to protect veteran homeowners from predatory lending practices when obtaining a VA-guaranteed refinance loan.

The act helps protect veterans and service members from the dangers associated with repeatedly refinancing their home loans, requiring, among other things, the seasoning of the original loan and a recoupment period for fees, closing costs, and expenses related to the refinance.

“We want to ensure veterans have the informed ability to take advantage of economic opportunities and make sound decisions that enable them to prosper when using their benefits,” said Acting VA Secretary Peter O’Rourke. “This is yet another tool that will help veterans meet their personal goals.”

The act also provides for a specified interest rate decrease and for protections of loan-to-value ratios. A refinancing loan must meet the requirements specified in the act or the VA will not guarantee the loan.

The VA recently implemented a policy where lenders provide veteran borrowers a comparison of their existing VA-backed home loan to the proposed one when refinancing to ensure borrowers are set up for success. This is also referred to as a recoupment or break-even analysis, which helps veteran borrowers clearly understand the costs of refinancing, the monthly payment savings, and the overall impact on their finances.

VA-backed home loans generally do not require a down payment, have low closing costs, and are the lowest rates among all loan products in the marketplace. Notably, VA-backed home loans also continue to outperform other products in the market. In fiscal year (FY) 2017, the VA guaranteed more than 740,000 loans for a total of \$189 billion, an all-time record for the VA Home Loan Program. Over the past three years, the VA has guaranteed more than two million VA home loans for over \$500 billion.

The VA Home Loan Program’s mission is to maximize veterans’ and service members’ opportunity to obtain, retain, and adapt homes by providing a viable and fiscally responsible benefit program in recognition of their service to the nation. In addition, the VA also helps severely disabled veterans adapt their homes to live more independently by providing up to \$81,080 for home modifications. For more information, including eligibility criteria, visit [Housing Grants for Disabled Veterans](#).



VA RELEASES NATIONAL SUICIDE DATA REPORT

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released findings from its most recent analysis of veteran suicide data for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. This report yields several important insights:

- Suicide rates increased for both veterans and non-veterans, underscoring the fact that suicide is a national public health concern that affects people everywhere.
- The average number of veterans who died by suicide each day remained unchanged at 20.
- The suicide rate increased faster among veterans who had *not* recently used Veterans Health Administration health care than among those who had.

The report, known as “VA National Suicide Data Report 2005–2015,” is available at https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/Suicide-Prevention-Data.asp.

The analysis is part of the VA’s ongoing examination of more than 55 million civilian and veteran death records that is being used to evaluate and improve VA’s Suicide Prevention Program. Data from this report were obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)’s National Death Index and then linked to both VA and Department of Defense (DoD) data.

The VA is committed to publishing the most accurate suicide data possible. CDC has 2016 data, but the VA works with both CDC and DoD to analyze millions of records and data sources to produce an analysis of suicide deaths for all known veterans. This collaboration adds a layer of complexity to the analysis process thus making 2015 the most current year for which the VA is able to publish complete veteran suicide data. The VA is working with CDC and DoD to innovate and refine the data analysis and plans to publish 2016 veteran suicide data in fall 2018.

The report includes suicide rates from 2005 to 2015 for both veteran and non-veteran populations segmented by age, race and gender, and analyzes veteran rates based on service branch and era, suicide method and suicide risk factors. These data inform the ongoing work of the VA and its partners to prevent suicide and expand the network of support for veterans.

“Suicide remains a top clinical priority,” said Acting VA Secretary Mr. Peter O’Rourke. “One life lost to suicide is one too many. Suicide is a serious public health concern in the veteran population and across all communities nationwide. These data offer important insights to help the VA to build effective networks of support, communication and care that reach veterans where they live and thrive.”

Suicide is a complex issue and is influenced by a multitude of intersecting factors that can increase or decrease suicide risk. The VA Suicide Prevention Program’s public health approach addresses the risk factors associated with suicidal behavior — such as a prior suicide attempt, stressful life events or the availability of lethal means — while promoting the protective factors that can offset risk — such as positive coping skills, feeling connected to other people and access to mental health care.

Data form an integral part of VA’s public health strategy and enable VA to tailor research-backed suicide-prevention initiatives to reach diverse groups across the Veteran population.

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SUICIDE DATA (CONTINUED)

In the years since these data were captured, the VA has undertaken substantial suicide-prevention efforts, including:

- Expansion of the Veterans Crisis Line,
- Creation of new cross-sector partnerships,
- Implementation of the Joint Action Plan for Supporting Veterans During Their Transition From Uniformed Service to Civilian Life,
- Launch of SAVE online suicide prevention training, and
- Development of the forthcoming National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide.

Learn more about the VA's suicide-prevention resources and programs at www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/.

Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a veteran in crisis, should call the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year at 800-273-8255 and press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or send a text message to 838255.

MIDWEST HONOR FLIGHT



Midwest Honor Flight was created as a way to say "Thank You" to veterans. Help Midwest Honor Flight treat veterans to a special trip. Veterans interested in participating on one of these trips need to complete this [application](#). It costs nothing. Learn more by visiting by www.midwesthonorflight.org.

Save the Date

Improving Veterans Care Conference

This mental health summit delivers important information that will assist healthcare providers and other professionals as they work to support families of Veterans and our Citizen Soldiers in South Dakota.

This one-day mental health summit will be held in Rapid City.

Black Hills State University Center
4300 Cheyenne Boulevard
Rapid City, South Dakota

**Tuesday
September 11, 2018**

Focus:

**Military Sexual Trauma
Opioid Addiction & Treatment
Suicide Prevention**

To register & for details contact Northeast SD AHEC:
www.nesdahec.org or call (605)229-8305

PTSI AWARENESS DAY

At the request of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, Gov. Dennis Daugaard has proclaimed June 27, 2018, as "Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Awareness Day," a day to reflect on the causes, symptoms and treatment of post-traumatic stress injuries.

"The brave men and women of the United States Armed Forces who proudly serve the United States and risk their lives to protect our freedom deserve the investment of every possible resource to ensure their lasting physical, mental, and emotional well-being," the Governor's proclamation states.

"It is important that we ensure our heroes embrace their invisible wounds in a timely, confident manner, ultimately saving lives and preserving families," said Larry Zimmerman, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA). "As Americans, we could not enjoy the blessings of freedom and liberty without the service of these men and women fulfilling an extraordinary duty."

South Dakota Joining Forces is a new facet of SDDVA. The mission of Joining Forces is to enhance the state's ability to meet the behavioral-health care needs of its service members, veterans and their families by increasing access to appropriate care, closing gaps, building the system's capacity, increasing interagency communication and building collaboration.



Zimmerman is encouraging everyone to help raise PTSI awareness. "Awareness of PTSI can be divided into three themes," said Zimmerman. "Learn, connect and share. Take the mystery out of PTSI by learning more about the invisible wounds and the treatments that are available. Reach out to someone and give support. Help spread the word. Working together we can make a difference."

NEW SD SPECIALTY LICENSE PLATES AVAILABLE JULY 1

The South Dakota Department of Revenue will begin offering new personalized rear only, woman veteran and original historical motorcycle specialty license plate options to qualifying applicants July 1.

The personalized rear only plate will be available for vehicles with an annual mileage less than 7,500 miles that are not used for general or commercial use as authorized by 2018's House Bill 1116. Applicants must pay a \$25 special plate fee and a \$5 mailing fee in addition to annual vehicle registration fees. Personalized plate messages are subject to the department's personalized plate policy.

A woman veteran plate will be available to any female veteran owner of a motor vehicle or motorcycle who has a valid South Dakota driver's license or identification card per 2018's Senate Bill 97. Applicants must sign an affidavit stating that she is an honorably discharged veteran who has served on active duty in the armed forces of the U.S. Applicants must pay a \$10 special plate fee, a \$5 mailing fee and annual vehicle registration fees.

South Dakotans may also now utilize an original South Dakota motorcycle license plate with the passing of 2018's House Bill 1117. The original plates must be in good condition and from the same year as the vehicle. Applicants must include color photographs of the plates, along with a one-time fee of \$10.

"With the addition of the personalized rear only plate, woman veteran plate and the original historical motorcycle plate, South Dakota now offers 142 different license plates," Motor Vehicle Division Director Lisa Weyer said.

Residents may apply for these license plates at their local county treasurer's office or online at <https://mysdcars.sd.gov> during their renewal period.



VFW ANNOUNCES CHANGE OF COMMAND

The Department of SD Veterans of Foreign Wars conducted an installation ceremony Saturday June 16 to complete the 2018-2019 election process.

Danny Frisby-Griffin, a member of Madison's Ronald Westby VFW Post 2638, was elected State Commander replacing Rick Williamson, a member of Canton's Lincoln VFW Post 3164.

During the past year, Williamson worked closely with the South Dakota Veterans Council to support and promote an East River State Veterans Cemetery.

"I am honored to have been the Commander of this great organization for the past year," stated Williamson, "and am pleased with the accomplishments that we have achieved during 2017-18 through the efforts of every post and District within our Department. I am equally honored to turn our department over to very capable Commander Danny Frisby-Griffin and the rest of our line officers."

Danny Frisby-Griffin takes command of the Department of SD VFW after the second straight year where the Department has achieved 100% membership. Frisby-Griffin's theme for his command year is "Providing Top Cover" and will focus on ensuring the members and posts across South Dakota are getting the support they need from National, the Department, and District officers. He is also the SD VFW Baseball Chairman and responsible for 16 regional and state tournaments across four age divisions and three classes.

"I'm humbled and excited for this awesome opportunity to shepherd the Department of SD VFW and give back to the veterans of South Dakota and our nation," said Frisby-Griffin. "Our success will be determined by our service attitude."

Also elected for the 2018-2019 Command year were Senior Vice Commander Sean Johnson, C. C. Croal VFW Post #17, Junior Vice Commander Cody Mangold, Ernest Bowyer VFW Post #791, Adjutant/Quartermaster Darwin Tolzin, George Dokken VFW Post #2118, Judge Advocate Barb McKean, Hutchinson County VFW Post #3298 and Surgeon Colin Reisner, Ernest Bowyer VFW Post #791.

Mary Kirkvold of Sioux Falls, was elected to VFW State Auxiliary president.

SDDVA Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard briefed the members on the State Veterans Home, the proposed East River State Veterans Cemetery, and the numerous accomplishments of the Department.

SDDVA Field Service Officer Will Huffmon serves as the veterans service officer for the VFW and attended the entire convention.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Jun 22—Veterans Stand Down—CRST Veterans Building—Eagle Butte—10:00 am—1:30 pm (CT)
Jun 27—Black Hills Veterans Job Fair—Western Dakota Tech (800 Mickelson Dr.) Rapid City 11:00 am—4:00 pm (MT)
Jul 4—Independence Day (state offices closed)
Jul 7—Veterans for Veterans Annual Poker Run—Mitchell Depot—1:00 pm (CT)
Jul 11—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—PVA Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
Jul 12—Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Cemetery Grand Opening—Sisseton—11:00 am (CT)
Jul 13 —VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Education Classroom—Fort Meade—10:00 am (MT)
Jul 14—VVA SD State Council Third Quarter Meeting—Pierre Post 8 American Legion—11:00 am (CT)
Jul 14-17—DAV National Convention—Reno, NV
Jul 21-25—VFW National Convention—Kansas City, MO
Jul 26—VABHHCS Veterans Town Hall—Post 8 American Legion—Pierre 11:00 am—4:00 pm (CT)
Aug 20-24—SDDVA Benefits School—Ramkota—Pierre
Aug 24-30—American Legion National Convention—Minneapolis, MN
Sept 3—Labor Day (state offices closed)
Sept 11—Improving Veterans Care Conference—BHSU (4300 Cheyenne Boulevard) - Rapid City
Sept 14—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—VFW Post 1273—Rapid City—10:00 am (MT)
Sept 21—7th Annual POW/MIA Program—Sioux Falls Veterans Memorial Park (1021 W. Bailey Street) 6:30 pm (CT)
Oct 10—SD Veterans Commission Meeting—Soldiers and Sailors Building—Pierre—8:00 am (CT)
Nov 16—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Domiciliary Auditorium—Hot Springs —10:00 am (MT)



Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer
South Dakota Department of the Military <http://military.sd.gov>
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>
Soldiers and Sailors Building - 425 E Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: 605-773-8242
E-mail address: audry.ricketts@state.sd.us

